

United States Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Biological Survey

HOUSE CLEANING ON THE FUR FARM

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Even though you have given your ranch a late spring house[#] cleaning, it would also be good business to repeat this operation in the fall, so that the pens, dens, and premises are in the best possible sanitary condition before ^{the} breeding season begins. ^{the outbreak of} It is possible to prevent a considerable number of diseases by establishing and maintaining conditions most conducive to health. Cleanliness and rational methods of management are marks of the good rancher and successful fox-raiser, and aid in keeping foxes ~~in~~ healthy and vigorous. Dr. Karl B. Hanson, Director of the United States Fur[#] Animal Experiment Station, ^{Saratoga Springs, N.Y.,} ^{advises} ~~calls attention to the fact that~~ fur farmers ~~should~~ ^{to} not center so much attention on curing diseases as on removing some of their causes. Consequently, it is important that fox ranchers keep always in mind that it is better to try to prevent diseases than attempt to cure them. Bones, pieces of food, and manure should not be allowed to accumulate in the pens, but should be picked up at frequent intervals and burned. Droppings (manure) are potentially dangerous because they frequently contain worm eggs and disease germs.

"Contagious diseases are caused by specific germs or viruses," says Dr. Hanson, "which ^{may} ~~will~~ produce disease ^{if} ~~whenever~~ they gain access to susceptible subjects." ^{Such maladies} They are much inclined to spread; ^{they} ~~and~~ are usually difficult to cure and quite often result in a high mortality.

Every fox farm should be equipped with a group of quarantine or retention pens, which should be placed at least 15 feet apart and several hundred feet from the main ranch and the feed room. There should be a sufficient number of pens to accommodate 10 to 20 percent of the foxes on the ranch. New stock should be quarantined and examined for infection of any kind and, if necessary, treated before being placed with healthy animals or in the breeding pens. The removal of manure, litter, or refuse is essential not only because this organic matter interferes with the action of most disinfectants, but also because disinfectants act only to a limited depth. A satisfactory method of disinfecting fox houses and nest boxes is as follows: First remove all manure, litter, and other debris and safely dispose of it, preferably by burning; then, thoroughly scrub the houses and nest boxes with a 5-percent solution of lye (sodium hydroxide) or washing soda (sodium carbonate), using a stiff brush and being sure to clean all corners and crevices; next, rinse with clear water and spray with an effective coal-tar disinfectant solution; and finally dry the house either by flaming it with a torch or by leaving it open for several hours. Soaking the ground with a hot, 5-percent saponified cresol solution or with some other effective coal-tar disinfectant and flaming thoroughly with a large torch are good methods of disinfecting the pens ^{of} ~~for~~ bacterial organisms.

The greatest obstacles that fox farmers have to overcome are losses of their animals, mainly from contagious diseases. ^{These can be} ~~It is possible to prevented~~ ~~these diseases~~ by taking precautionary measures. Every fur farmer should practice good sanitation on his ranch not only to prevent disease but to give the foxes every possible opportunity to remain healthy and produce fur of superior quality.

Fleas are annoying to foxes, and on some ranches they are so numerous that the quality of the fur is being impaired. Indications are that ~~the~~

flea infestation may be ^{the cause of} responsible for some of the tip-chewing that has ^{to a} ~~caused~~ considerable ^{extent} damage to fox pelts, ^{and} ~~thereby~~ ^{ed} resulting in a loss to the producer. Fleas should not be tolerated on any fox farm and every precaution should be taken to ^{prevent their} ~~combat them.~~ occurrence.

Leaflet No. 47, "Hygiene in Fox Farming," by Karl B. Hanson, tells how ~~it is possible~~ to prevent diseases ^{outbreaks} and parasites ^{is infestation}. If you do not have a copy of this, ^{it would be well to obtain} ~~leaflet better get one before you~~ start ^{ing} the fall clean up. Send your request to the Office of Information, ~~of the~~ Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.